

Staff Report

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING HIGH SPEED RAIL

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

At the March 10 Belmont City Council meeting, Council member Christine Wozniak reported she had attended a High Speed Rail (HSR) ad hoc meeting of elected officials from peninsula cities. She requested staff obtain a copy of a resolution passed by the City of Atherton. Two Atherton resolutions as well as a HSR staff report from the City of Palo Alto are attached to this report. Staff suggests the Council discuss them and provide direction to staff with respect to:

- a) The intent and substance of a HSR related resolution you would like staff to draft for your future consideration; and
- b) Forming a working group to develop response comments to the HSR EIR/EIS Scoping Notice of Preparation before the April 6th deadline; and
- c) Designation of one or two Council members to represent the City of Belmont in meetings with other peninsula cities, regional agencies and the California High Speed Rail Authority working with City staff; and
- d) Authorizing the Mayor to sign a letter to other peninsula cities expressing Belmont's willingness to participate in the Peninsula HSR Cities Consortium

Background

In November 2008, California voters approved a \$9.95 billion dollar bond issue to build an 800 mile High Speed train system (HSR) from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The HSR EIR is being developed by the California High Speed Rail Authority and the Federal Railroad Administration. The project EIR/EIS and 30 percent preliminary design is projected to be completed by the end of 2011. The HSR would operate at speeds up to 220 mph in rural areas and up to 125 mph on the peninsula. The express travel time from San Francisco to Los Angeles would be approximately 2 ½ hours. At build out in 2030, the system intends to run nine trains per hour (Caltrain currently runs eight trains per hour), or one every six minutes in each direction at peak times. The project assumes the need for four tracks along the Caltrain right-of-way instead of the current two. The inside tracks would be shared by HSR and Caltrain Baby Bullet express trains and the two outside tracks would handle local Caltrain and off-peak Union Pacific freight trains. An operational model is being developed that will demonstrate how the two systems can co-exist.

The High Speed Rail Authority, based in Sacramento, has been holding public meetings to discuss the route alternatives and the alignment. For northern California, two alternative routes were identified: (1) the Altamont pass route entrance into the bay area; and (2) the Pacheco pass route. The HSR Authority has selected the Pacheco pass/Gilroy/San Jose/Peninsula route to San Francisco. Consultants have been retained to conduct an initial study and prepare an Environmental Impact report. The deadline for commenting on the scope of the EIR is April 6th, although the deadline may be extended.

An "Ad Hoc" group of peninsula city elected officials has begun to meet and discuss the HSR project issues. It desires to form a "Peninsula Cities Consortium" to discuss issues and present a unified voice to the HSR Authority. Belmont Council member Christine Wozniak attended the last meeting and gave a verbal report at the March 10 Council meeting.

Atherton

The first resolution from the Town of Atherton opposes high-speed rail bonds, and urged a 'no' vote on Proposition 1A during the November 2008 general election. The second resolution encourages undergrounding the HSR.

Palo Alto

A staff report from the City of Palo Alto dated March 2, 2009 as well as a draft of Palo Alto's Scoping comments dated March 31 is attached.

Belmont

Attached to this report is also a copy of the questionnaire we responded to last month. This can be a starting point for the Belmont working group to develop their response comments. The City Council may want to consider delegating HSR working group oversight responsibility to the City Infrastructure Committee.

Discussion

There are only two weeks left before the April 6 comment deadline. Staff suggests the Council consider:

- a) Giving staff direction on the intent and substance of what you would like in a City of Belmont Council resolution on HSR; and
- b) Forming a working group to develop quickly response comments to the HSR EIR/EIS scoping notice of preparation. The working group could be composed of the Community Development Director, one or two City Council members, the Chair of the Planning Commission, the City Historian and the City Public Works Director to prepare and transmit under the Mayor signature a set of comments from the City of Belmont; and
- c) Designation of one or two Council members to represent the City of Belmont in meetings with other peninsula cities, regional agencies and the California High Speed Rail Authority working with City staff; and
- d) Authorizing the Mayor to sign a letter to other peninsula cities expressing Belmont's willingness to participate in the Peninsula HSR Cities Consortium.

General Plan/Vision Statement

Not applicable.

Fiscal Impact

None at this time. Should the High Speed Rail project be built, it would have major development related implications for the City.

Public Contact

Publication and posting of City Council agenda.

Recommendation

- a) Giving staff direction on the intent and substance of what you would like in a City of Belmont Council resolution on HSR; and
- b) Forming a working group to develop quickly response comments to the HSR EIR/EIS scoping notice of preparation. The working group could be composed of the Community Development Director, one or two City Council members, the Chair of the Planning Commission, the City Historian and the City Public Works Director to prepare and transmit under the Mayor signature a set of comments from the City of Belmont; and
- c) Designation of one or two Council members to represent the City of Belmont in meetings with other peninsula cities, regional agencies and the California High Speed Rail Authority working with City staff; and
- d) Authorizing the Mayor to sign a letter to other peninsula cities expressing Belmont's support for the HSR Consortium.

Alternatives

Take no action on the suggested resolution.

Attachments

- A. Two resolutions from the Town of Atherton
- Staff Report from City of Palo Alto
- Draft EIR/EIS Response Comments from the City of Palo Alto C.
- Newspaper Article on Palo Alto HSR D.
- City of Belmont HSR questionnaire response January 2009 Ε.
- Letter to HSR Authority from PA Mayor March 2, 2009 F.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack R. Crist

City Manager

Staff Contact:

Jack Crist, City Manager

650-595-7410

icrist@belmont.gov

RESOLUTION NO. 08-54

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF ATHERTON REGARDING MITIGATION OF HIGH-SPEED RAIL BY TUNNELING/TRENCHING THE RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR HIGH-SPEED RAIL THROUGH THE TOWN OF **ATHERTON**

WHEREAS, the Town of Atherton has carefully monitored proposals for high-speed rail from San Francisco to Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, the Town has submitted numerous recommendations regarding the best route for high-speed rail, which comments neither have been recognized or properly addressed;

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the Town of Atherton hereby resolves as follows:

The City Council declares its position that because high-speed rail bonds were approved by voters at the election on November 4, 2008, the project when implemented through the Town of Atherton be constructed in a tunnel or trench below grade. Construction in this fashion, while not avoiding all negative impacts including, particularly, noise, will at least be mitigated.

This Resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the City Council of the Town of Atherton at a regular meeting thereof held on the 17th day of December, 2008, by the following vote:

| AYES: | 5 | Council Members: Lewis, | Dobbie, Marsala, Carlson, McKeithen |
|-------------|---------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| NOES: | 0 | Council Members: None | |
| ABSENT: | 0 | Council Members: None | |
| ABSTAIN: | 0 | Council Members: None | |
| | | | Joney Carlson MAYOD |
| | | | Jerry Carlson, MAYOR Town of Atherton |
| ATTEST: | | | Town of America |
| Kathi Hamil | ton, A | cting City Clerk | |
| APPROVEI | O AS T | O FORM: | |
| Marc G. Hy | nes, Ci | tv Attornev | |

RESOLUTION NO. 08-38

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF ATHERTON OPPOSING HIGH-SPEED RAIL BONDS AND URGING NO VOTE ON PROPOSITION 1A AT THE NOVEMBER 4, 2008, GENERAL ELECTION

WHEREAS, the Town of Atherton has carefully monitored proposals for high-speed rail from San Francisco to Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, the Town has submitted numerous recommendations regarding the best route for high-speed rail, which comments have neither been recognized nor responded to; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the Town of Atherton has determined to officially state its opposition to Proposition 1A Bonds to finance the High-Speed Rail Project;

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the Town of Atherton hereby resolves as follows:

The City Council of the Town of Atherton opposes the approval at the election scheduled for November 4, 2008, of bonds to finance the High-Speed Rail Project because high-speed rail as presently envisioned would not be in the best interests of the Town of Atherton or its residents. The City Council urges a "no" vote on Proposition 1A.

This Resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the City Council of the Town of Atherton at a special meeting thereof held on the 24th day of September, 2008, by the following vote:

AYES: 4 Council Members: Dobbie, J.Carlson, Marsala, McKeithen

NOES: 0 Council Members: None ABSENT: 0 Council Members: None ABSTAIN: 1 Council Members: Janz

> Jerry Carlson, VICE MAYOR Town of Atherton

| ATTEST: |
|-----------------------------------|
| Kathi Hamilton, Acting City Clerk |
| APPROVED AS TO FORM: |
| Marc G. Hynes, City Attorney |



City of Palo Alto City Manager's Report

TO:

HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM:

CITY MANAGER

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING

AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE:

MARCH 2, 2009

CMR: 146:09

REPORT TYPE:

REPORT OF OFFICIALS

SUBJECT:

Status Report and Review of Draft Scoping Comments Regarding California

High Speed Train (HST) San Francisco to San Jose Project EIR/EIS, and

Authorization to Proceed with Next Steps

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council:

- 1. Direct the Mayor to establish a City Council High Speed Train Subcommittee of three members to represent Palo Alto in meetings with other Peninsula cities, regional agencies and the California High Speed Rail Authority (Authority) working meetings with the City staff.
- 2. Authorize the Mayor to sign the joint letter (Attachment A) from participating Peninsula cities to the Authority (Authority) requesting that Authority staff and design team work collaboratively with the cities to develop optimal design alternatives for the HST and to ensure that the cities' concerns are addressed in the environmental and engineering analysis.
- 3. Review the draft list of scoping comments (Attachment B) to be included in a letter to the Authority on the San Francisco to San Jose Project EIR/EIS and direct staff to return to Council prior to the April 6 scoping comment period deadline to review and finalize the City's comment letter.
- 4. Authorize the Mayor to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding among Peninsula cities to form a Peninsula Cities Consortium for the purpose of representing to the Authority the united interests of Peninsula cities in the High Speed Train Project.
- 5. Direct staff to return to Council with HST policy statements for Council approval.
- Direct staff to consider the need for funding of urban design and/or engineering consultant services for expertise in HST design in the 2010-2011 operating budget to supplement staff resources.

BACKGROUND

On November 4, 2008 the voters passed Proposition 1A, which authorized \$9.95 billion in bond funds to plan and build the California High Speed Train Project (HST). The HST project will construct an 800 mile high speed train system between San Francisco and Los Angeles. The HST will be electrified and fully grade-separated. With bullet trains operating at speeds up to 220 mph in rural areas and up to 125 mph on the Peninsula, the express travel time from downtown San Francisco to Los Angeles will be just under 2½ hours.

The Authority is the state entity responsible for planning, constructing, and operating the high-speed train system. The Authority has a nine-member policy board (five appointed by the Governor, two appointed by the Senate Rules Committee, and two by the Speaker of the Assembly), and a small core staff. All environmental, planning, and engineering work is performed by private firms under contract with the Authority. The Authority and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) are the agencies responsible for preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the San Francisco to San Jose HST project. The Authority is currently in discussions with the Caltrain Joint Powers Board (Caltrain) regarding a Memorandum of Understanding that would result in a combined Caltrain/HST project on the Peninsula.

In 2008, the Authority and FRA approved the Program EIR/EIS for the Central Valley to Bay Area HST project, and selected the Pacheco Pass route from the Central Valley to San Francisco via San Jose, and the Peninsula along the Caltrain corridor. HST stations were designated in San Francisco, San Jose, and Millbrae with an optional mid-peninsula station in Palo Alto or Redwood City. One of these two cities, or neither, could be selected as a designated station by the Authority during the project level EIR/EIS for the San Francisco to San Jose HST project.

On December 15, 2008, the City Council directed staff to prepare a report within 60 days that responded to a number of questions and concerns about the impacts on and implications for Palo Alto related to the overall HST project and Palo Alto as a potential HST station (Attachment C).

On January 16, 2009 City staff received a briefing from HST staff for the San Jose to San Francisco HST project, their engineering consultants, and Caltrain representatives on the specific work and schedule of the project.

Scoping meetings for the San Francisco to San Jose HST train project EIR/EIS were held in late January, including a meeting for Santa Clara County on January 29, 2009. The HST presentation for the scoping meetings is provided as Attachment D. The Authority originally set a deadline of March 6 for scoping comments. At the request of Palo Alto (see Attachment E, letter from Mayor Drekmeier) and other concerned jurisdictions, the comment period has been extended one month to April 6, 2009 (Attachment F).

On February 17, Council Member Kishimoto and City staff and CAHSR consultants participated in a meeting sponsored by the Southgate neighborhood at the PAUSD Administrative Offices on the HST project. Over 100 residents attended the meeting. FAQs from that meeting have been posted on the City's website at www.cityofpaloalto.org/cahsr.

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On February 26, 2009 a community meeting was sponsored by the Authority at Mitchell Park Community Center to inform the community about the HST project in Palo Alto. Staff will provide a verbal report on the meeting at the March 2nd Council meeting.

DISCUSSION

Response to Council Questions

In response to the Council Colleagues' memo assignment, staff has prepared the following responses to the Council's questions based on information that is currently available. Please note that some of the questions and responses have been grouped together to address related or overlapping issues, so the questions below are not in the same order as in the Colleagues' Memo.

1. What criteria and time frame will the High Speed Rail Authority use to select final station locations?

The Project EIR/EIS and 30% preliminary design will be completed by the end of 2011, with the issuance of a NEPA Record of Decision. Authority staff has indicated the 15% design will be completed within one year.

The Authority has issued guidelines for station area development as outlined in the Bay Area to Central Valley Final Program EIR/EIS. The HST Station Area Development principles and Station Area Development Guidelines are provided as Attachment G. In summary, the Authority will use the following criteria in selecting station locations:

- Station locations must have the potential to promote higher density, mixed use, pedestrian accessible development.
- The responsible local governments are expected to provide for transit-oriented development (TOD) around station locations through planning and zoning.
- Give priority to stations where the local agency has adopted station area TOD plans and general plans that prioritize development on TOD areas.
- Local governments are expected to finance public spaces needed to support the pedestrian/bicycle station area amenities and facilities.

The Program EIR/EIS included a description and comparison of the Redwood City and Palo Alto stations. Both were judged similar in terms of costs, construction, right-of-way, and environmental impacts, with Palo Alto offering potentially higher ridership and transit connectivity. Both will be studied in the Project EIR/EIS. It is expected that the decisions on the mid-peninsula stop at either Redwood City or Palo Alto, or neither, will be made by the Authority by 2011.

The Authority will also evaluate the viability of a mid-Peninsula HST stop in conjunction with the outcome of the operational analysis of the entire HST system and the Authority's determination of whether such a stop is compatible with the goals for the HST running time between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

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3. What impact will HST have on existing Caltrain service?

The joint planning process the Authority and Caltrain will undertake in the coming year will provide more information about any potential impacts or changes in existing Caltrain service.

The HST service plan assumes the need for four tracks along the Caltrain right-of-way instead of the current two. The inside tracks would be shared by HST and Caltrain Baby Bullet express trains, and the two outside tracks would handle local Caltrain service and off-peak Union Pacific freight trains.

A critical milestone for the project is the completion of the operational model for the entire HST system, which will show how the system can achieve the timetables set forth in the Program EIR/EIS. The operational model that is being developed will analyze the two systems will coexist along the right-of-way and if the number of trains planned for each system by 2030 can be achieved. For example, the HST plan calls for 9 trains per hour during the peak periods; Caltrain currently runs 8 trains per hour during the peak. The operational plan will determine if and how these objectives can be achieved. The operating plan will is expected to be completed by summer.

The EIR/EIS will examine a No Project alternative which would assume no HST project between San Jose and San Francisco, which in principle, would keep Caltrain service as currently provided and planned for in Caltrain's long range plan (Caltrain 2025 Plan). However, a permutation of the No Project alternative which staff believes should be evaluated would be an enhanced, fully grade-separated Caltrain service functioning as the high speed train connection between San Jose and San Francisco.

The most critical issue related to Caltrain service is the constructability of the HST system while maintaining Caltrain service over several years of construction. These issues will be fully addressed during the EIR/EIS and preliminary engineering process.

5. How and when will decisions be made on how HST and Caltrain will pass through Palo Alto (trench, raised, underground, ground level) and how options might be financed since the existing bond financing will not be sufficient?

The decisions on the method of construction for the HST in Palo Alto will be made by the Authority at the conclusion of the EIR/EIS project and 30% design.

Measure 1A specified that no more than 50% of the funding for any HST segment can come from the bond measure, with the remaining 50% coming from federal and local sources, including private funding/private partnerships. Local financial support would include cost sharing with local agencies, contribution of right-of-way (e.g., Caltrain), commercial concessions at train station, local revenues from transit-oriented development, and cooperative funding with local transit agencies. The contribution of the Caltrain right-of-way is also a substantial local contribution.

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The Caltrain right-of way in Palo Alto varies considerably from as narrow as 60' (at Peers Park) to over 160' at the two Caltrain stations. The remainder of the right-of-way typically varies from 75' to 110' wide.

Four profiles for the HST project in Palo Alto were identified in the Programmatic EIR for the San Francisco to San Jose project (See Attachment I). The first, Figure CC-3, depicts the four track right-of-way with tracks elevated or depressed approximately 10 feet. The second, Figure CC-4, shows the potential highway overpass or underpass configurations. The third, Figure CC-8, shows the four tracks at grade. These exhibits show a required right-of-way for the tracks of a minimum of 74'. As mentioned above, there are segments of the right-of-way that are narrower than this minimum and additional right-of-way could be required. The fourth, Figure CC-S1 depicts the right-of-way requirements at the Palo Alto or Redwood City station and more than 140' at the station. However, this figure may be subject to change. During meetings with Authority staff, there has been discussion about the potential need for six tracks or more at a station. This will be determined as the Authority moves into more detailed design of the system.

The above-grade and at-grade profiles raise significant concerns about potential aesthetics and visual impacts, noise, land use, right-of-way, loss of property values, circulation and construction impacts of the HST project. HST staff has committed to studying undergrounding as a project alternative. Staff believes this should be a full alternatives analysis at the same level as the project analysis. Undergrounding has the potential to reduce or eliminate many of these impacts.

Undergrounding of the tracks could further provide the opportunity for air rights development above the rail lines within the Caltrain corridor to offset the cost differential between atgrade/elevated construction and tunneling.

City Council members have been meeting with representatives of other peninsula jurisdictions to develop a framework that would enable the local communities to have a stronger voice and potentially a formal role in the decisions about whether the railroad will be at grade, elevated or underground within the mid-peninsula (see discussion of Peninsula Cities Consortium, below).

- 2. What are the potential cost impacts to the city should Palo Alto be designated as a HST station?
- 4. What are the anticipated land use, infrastructure, and environmental impacts of a HST station?
- 6. What are the potential economic development impacts to Palo Alto?

The HST Business Plan Engineering Element (October 2008) states that as the project proceeds to more detailed study, local governments will be engaged to discuss planning and zoning for transit—oriented development around high speed train stations and to review opportunities to finance (e.g. through value-enhancement, tax increment, or other financing techniques) and maintain the public spaces needed to support the pedestrian traffic generated for the HST project.

The Authority will be looking for land use decisions by local agencies that will contribute to a successful, high ridership, profitable HST station. The Authority has stated that they expect

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station area plans to be developed and adopted for all areas within ½ miles radius of a HST station that provide for higher mixed-use TOD development than in the surrounding areas.

The traffic circulation and parking impacts related to a Palo Alto HST station will be analyzed in the EIR/EIS. The fact sheet for a potential Palo Alto station in the Program EIR/EIS, calls for a new 850 space, four level parking garage located at the southern end of El Camino Park. The Authority expects parking to be market rate (no free parking). This description is not specific enough to determine if the parking structure is envisioned over existing playing fields or could be in the area of the existing VTA transit center. Either option has land use implications for Palo Alto.

Economic impacts to downtown or other areas of the City and relative to City services have not been estimated, and will be highly dependent on the options chosen, particularly whether there is a station in Palo Alto, the extent of right-of-way required, and potential land use changes. While an economic analysis is not required in the EIR/EIS process, staff believes the City should request such an analysis within or simultaneous to the environmental review.

7. What are the options for how HST operates on the Peninsula such as speed and frequency and what mitigations are envisioned?

The Ridership and Revenue Forecasts prepared for the Program EIR/EIS (see Attachment H) call for a total of 256 trains daily on the system, including 222 trains operating between San Jose and San Francisco. In the peak hours of 6 am to 9 am and 4 pm to 7 pm, 57 trains would operate on average every 9 minutes in each direction. During the off-peak hours of 5 am to 6 am, midday and evenings until midnight, 71 trains would operate approximately every 11 minutes between San Francisco and Los Angeles in each direction. The projections indicate that 30 of the 57 peak period trains and 43 of the off-peak trains in each direction would stop at the Palo Alto or Redwood City station. The maximum speed of trains along the Caltrain corridor would be 125 miles per hour. Caltrain currently operates at a maximum speed of 79 mph. This service plan is currently being revisited as part of the project level EIR.

8. What are the potential economic benefits of HST access in Palo Alto? What are the potential impacts if the station were located in Redwood City?

Potential economic benefits of HST access could result from increased growth, enhanced property values (at least for newly developed and redeveloping parcels) and visitorship to the City as a destination point or stopover on the route. If a station is located in Redwood City (or no mid-Peninsula station is provided at all), economic benefits still might be accrued from improved transit access to and from Palo Alto. Quantification of those benefits has not been initiated, and staff again recommends that the Council request the Authority to evaluate the economic benefits and costs as part of or simultaneous with the preparation of the EIR/EIS.

Scoping Comments

On January 8, 2009, the Authority issued a Notice of Preparation inviting comments on the scope of work to be included in the Project EIR/EIS. Staff has prepared the attached draft scoping comments for Council review and comment, prior to incorporating the comments into a letter to

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the Authority. The final scoping letter must be forwarded to the Authority by April 6th. Staff will return to Council prior to the deadline with the final scoping comment letter for Council's review and approval.

Peninsula Cities Consortium

During the past month, Council Members Kishimoto, Barton and Burt have been meeting with elected officials of Peninsula cities to organize a coalition of agencies, the "Peninsula Cities Consortium" (Consortium), who can work in a unified voice to represent the mutual concerns to the Authority. The representatives have drafted the attached letter for all agencies to sign. The letter specifically requests that the Authority work with the cities to address urban design alternatives to be addressed in the EIR/EIS and to have the opportunity for the consortium to review the scoping report before it is finalized by the Authority.

Staff recommends that Council authorize the Mayor to appoint three Council members to a High Speed Rail Subcommittee to work with staff and represent the Council in meetings of the Consortium, and for the Subcommittee to report back to Council at regular intervals.

Staff and the City Attorney have also been working with Council Members Kishimoto, Barton and Burt to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would formalize the Consortium. This MOU is still in draft form being reviewed by other Peninsula cities interested in joining the Consortium. We need authority from the Council to enter into the MOU. Therefore, staff recommends that the Council authorize the Mayor to enter into the MOU once it is finalized.

Consultant Expertise

It is evident that City staff does not have the resources or specialized technical expertise to evaluate the engineering alternatives and potential urban design impacts of the HST project. Outside consulting expertise will be needed to critique or validate the assumptions and conclusions of the Authority's engineering and environmental consultants so that the City's interests can be fully represented in this process. Staff requests that the Council authorize the City Manager to consider including funding in the FY 2010 budget for consultant services. It is expected that the need for outside consultant services could extend up to three years, until the HST environmental study is completed.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This action is consistent with existing Council policy incorporated into the adopted Palo Alto Transportation Strategic Plan, which included support California High Speed Rail as a medium priority and stated City Council position in support of Measure 1A.

The recommended action for Council to provide scoping comments for the EIR/EIS for the San Francisco to San Jose segment is consistent with Policy T-7: Support plans for a quiet, fast rail system that encircles the Bay, and for intra-county and transbay transit systems that link Palo Alto to the rest of Santa Clara County and adjoining counties.

Staff will be developing more a specific policy statement on the HST project and will bring it back to Council for consideration in April.

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

This is not a project. No Palo Alto environmental review is needed for Council to provide comments on the proposed EIR/EIS for the San Francisco to San Jose segment of the CAHSR project.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Joint Peninsula Cities letter to CAHSR
- B. Draft City scoping comments
- C. Council Colleagues Memorandum dated December 15, 2008
- D. CAHSR Scoping Meetings presentation
- E. Mayor Drekmeier letter dated February 11, 2009
- F. CAHSR letter dated February 17, 2009
- G. HST Station Area Development Principles and Guidelines
- H. HST Ridership and Revenue Forecasts (excerpts)
- I. HST Profiles

COURTESY COPIES

Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce Bill Phillips, Stanford University Planning and Transportation Commission Southgate Representative Palo Alto Neighborhoods

| PREPARED BY: | Stanle tylens |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| | GAYLE LIKENS |
| | Transportation Manager |
| DEPARTMENT HEAD: | |
| | CURTIS WILLIAMS |
| | Interim Director of Planning and |
| • | Community Environment |
| CYMYL MANA CER A REPO | |
| CITY MANAGER APPRO | |
| | JAMES KEENE |

6. D.

DRAFT

City Of Palo Alto Scoping Comments For The California High Speed Rail Authority San Francisco To San Jose High Speed Train (HST) Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS)

The California High Speed Train project will have a long-lasting and far-reaching impact on the City of Palo Alto. The selected HST along the Caltrain right-of-way is located in the middle of the City and already bifurcates the City from east to west. It is important that the HST project include urban design and engineering solutions to minimize impacts and potentially reduce community divisions or barriers.

The following are issues and subjects that the City of Palo Alto requests be included in the scope of work for the project level EIR/EIS for the California High Speed Train Project from San Francisco to San Jose. The City requests that the CAHSRA address the following key issues and concerns in its evaluations:

Rail Alignment, Profile, and Right-of-Way

- The EIR/EIS should provide a complete analysis of all linear rail corridor elevation options including at-grade, elevated, or depressed including open trench and tunneling. All options, particularly the tunneling option, should be evaluated to the same level of detail as the elevated track proposal.
- Reopen the Central Valley to Bay Area Program EIR/EIS to reconsider the Altamont Pass alternative and I-280 or US-101 alignments for the Pacheco Pass route to reduce impacts on peninsula cities.
- Evaluate an alternative that would end HST at San Jose and rely on Caltrain connections to/from San Francisco, including facilitating improved Caltrain access and speeds (electrification, grade crossings, etc.).
- Evaluate service options that include HST operating at the same speeds as Baby Bullet trains from San Jose to San Francisco.
- Evaluate alternatives that would eliminate or substantially minimize the need to acquire additional right-of-way.
- Evaluate alternatives that would reduce the number of required tracks in the right-of-way to less than four tracks.
- Evaluate all feasible train technologies to remove the overhead catenary lines in Palo Alto and along the Caltrain corridor, including use of a third rail technology.

• Include an alternative that does not retain freight service on the Caltrain right-of-way and the requisite freight service railroad design requirements to accommodate freight operations.

Visual Impacts

 Analyze how visual impacts would vary with different vertical track alignments and identify ways to reduce visual impacts to the community.

Noise Impacts

- Evaluate how noise levels would vary with different vertical track alignments (i.e. tunnel, trench, track at grade, elevated track) and consider methods to reduce those impacts.
- Evaluate the impact on adjacent properties caused by vibrations associated with each construction method and mitigations to reduce those impacts.

Traffic Circulation

- Analyze the full traffic circulation, safety, emergency response and economic impacts of any proposed closures of existing at grade crossings.
- Analyze traffic impacts to City streets affected during construction, and specifically identify any streets that would be detoured or closed during construction or permanently as part of the project.
- Assess the traffic impacts associated with a HST station in Palo Alto independent of the traffic impacts of the HST project alone. This would include increased traffic on local Palo Alto streets associated with access to and parking demand at the Palo Alto HST station.
- Evaluate incorporating new and upgraded pedestrian/bicycle grade separations of the railroad, as recommended in the 2003 Palo Alto Bicycle Transportation Plan.
- Evaluate how the project will impact or could implement the planned long range improvements identified in the 2002 Palo Alto Intermodal Transit Center Plan
- The EIR/EIS should analyze how the project when built and during construction would impact access to the VTA transit center at the Palo Alto station and impact on Samtrans, VTA, Stanford Marguerite, Dumbarton Express and other local bus and shuttle services within Palo Alto.

Land Use Issues and Urban Design

 Evaluate the potential impacts of associated land development and/or parking resulting from the construction of the HST facilities. This should include working with City of Palo Alto staff to define a range of land use scenarios that might be generated from the project, including the potential to sell air rights for development above an underground rail option.

 Evaluate how a potential HST station in Palo Alto would affect right-of-way needs, and potential impacts of high intensity land use development around such a station. Impacts to be considered should include, but are not limited to, traffic and parking, visual resources, open space, and cultural/historic resources.

Economic Impacts

 Evaluate economic impacts to Palo Alto business districts including Downtown Palo Alto, California Avenue Business District, Town and Country Village and Stanford Shopping Center that may occur both during construction due to reduced access or traffic detours and after construction.

Private Property Impacts

- Evaluate the impacts of loss of real property values of adjacent and nearby properties due to the project. The analysis should consider the impacts of noise, vibration, increased daily trains, visual impacts of elevated structures, changes to circulation and access associated with the project.
- Analyze construction techniques that reduce construction and excavation impacts to adjacent properties.

Trees and Vegetation

- Evaluate alternatives that would preserve the 200 year old El Palo Alto redwood tree and/or minimize impacts on this historic tree and historic site on the De Anza National Historic. Independent agency designations of this tree are as follows: 'State of California Historical Landmark No. 2-The El Palo Alto' Redwood; Santa Clara County, 'El Palo Alto—a Point of Historical Interest'; City of Palo Alto 'Heritage Tree #1'.
- Analyze and mitigate the impacts of loss (removal or trimming) of significant trees and vegetation screening along the Caltrain right-of-way.

Creek Impacts

• Evaluate impacts on San Francisquito Creek, Adobe Creek, Barron Creek and Matadero Creek channels with regard to riparian habitat and creek flows.

<u>Historic Resources</u>

 Evaluate the impact on historic structures listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and/or the California Register of Historical Resources, structures listed on the City of Palo Alto's Historic Inventory, and areas identified as potential National Register historic districts in the "Palo Alto Historical Survey Update: Final Survey Report" by Dames & Moore, dated February 2001.

• Identify alternatives that would avoid or minimize project impacts on identified historic structures or areas.

Parks and Recreational Opportunities

 Evaluate the impact on City dedicated parks and recreational opportunities, including El Camino Park, Peers Park, Bowden Park, and El Palo Alto Park. This would include impacts on the loss of playing fields and potential mitigations.

Climate Change

 Provide an extensive and comprehensive analysis of climate change impacts associated with the implementation of the various options and alternatives through the mid-Peninsula area.

The City of Palo Alto appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on the scope of work for the Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the San Francisco to San Jose HST Project. The City looks forward to working with CAHSR staff on an ongoing basis to review alternatives, impacts and mitigation measures for the project in Palo Alto.

The Alercury News

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Palo Alto officials want study of high-speed train tunnel

By Will Oremus Daily News Staff Writer

Posted: 03/19/2009 12:31:11 AM PDT

State high-speed rail officials should give just as much study to running their tracks underground as above-ground, Palo Alto officials said Wednesday. But they noted that both alignments come with problems.

The city's planning and transportation commission signed off on a letter to the California High Speed Rail Authority that urges a close look at the planned Los Angeles-to-San Francisco line's impact on the residential neighborhoods it might divide. If approved by the city council, it will stand as the city's official input as the authority prepares a required environmental report that will set the stage for final decisions about the tracks' design.

The letter makes it clear the city will not be satisfied with a report that justifies elevated tracks along the Caltrain corridor while glossing over the pros and cons of alternatives. Among those alternatives are not only a rail tunnel but a plan that would cut off high-speed service in San Jose, forcing riders to transfer to Caltrain to reach San Francisco.

Though the majority of Palo Alto voters backed the rail plan on the November ballot, it came as news to many that the trains might need to run atop a 20-foot-high concrete platform to avoid dangerous conflicts with cross streets. Word of a "Berlin Wall" dividing the city and of people losing their yards and homes to eminent domain have sparked a local

backlash against the project in recent months.

Many in the city still support the train in concept but are grasping for ways to fit it into a narrow rail corridor that bisects quiet neighborhoods. The first paragraph of the city's draft letter asks that the study "provide a complete analysis of all linear rail corridor elevation options, including at-grade, elevated or depressed including open trench and tunneling."

It goes on, "All options, particularly the tunneling option, should be evaluated to the same level of detail as the elevated track proposal."

That doesn't mean the city considers a tunnel a miracle solution, however. Planning Commissioner Samir Tuma asked that city staff remove the clause "particularly the tunneling option," saying that it's not yet clear that would be the best alternative to raised tracks.

Most opposition to a tunnel so far has focused on the cost, which is presumed to be astronomical. But Commissioner Karen Holman agreed it may not be the answer even if the city can afford it. She said she often tells members of the public, "Don't fall in love with the below-grade scenario. There are all manner of potential impacts to that, and many are the same as above-grade."

Specifically, Holman said, construction of a tunnel or trench could disrupt the lives of those who live nearby and require the state to take people's property. Beyond that, it could pose problems related to underground water, including a toxic plume and an aquifer that serves as an emergency drinking-water supply.

Given that, Commissioner Daniel Garber wondered if the city should ask for more study of keeping the tracks at ground level. That would likely require

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The Mercury News

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closure of several cross streets, however, a possibility other commissioners were not interested in considering.

The overriding sentiment was captured by Commissioner Arthur Keller near the end of the four-hour-long session. "There is no completely satisfactory solution to this," he said. "All of the alternatives will have drawbacks. The question is which of the drawbacks are better than others, which of the drawbacks we can live with. And the ones can we live with, the ones Caltrain can live with and the ones high-speed rail can live with might not all be the same."

The Palo Alto City Council is scheduled to discuss and finalize the letter at a meeting on March 30. The high-speed rail authority's environmental study is legally required to address all official comments received before April 6.

E-mail Will Oremus at woremus@dailynewsgroup.com

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<u>City of Belmont, Ca Response to High Speed Rail (HSR)</u> <u>Questionnaire</u>

High Speed Rail—Caltrain Corridor Stakeholder interview Guide Stakeholder(s):

Agency: City of Belmont

1. With the recent voter approval of the high speed rail bond in November 2008 construction is likely to begin as early as 2011 on a statewide system of high-speed trains. Are you aware of this effort? What is your general impression of this effort? Is it necessary? Why or why not?

Yes, Belmont is aware of the proposed project and the general impression is that since this would be the first HSR system in America, it would be a good thing for the nation and for California. Lots of construction jobs would be created and major investment in improvements to the peninsula portion of the route would result. Improvements to air quality and traffic congestion are expected. Some residents have concerns that the environmental mitigation might be insufficient to match the impact.

2. The trains will run on the Caltrain tracks between San Francisco and San Jose. How do you feel about the alignment?

Only realistic place to put it on the Peninsula

- 3. Do you have any concerns or issues that come to mind about using the Caltrain Corridor for high speed rail that we should be aware of?
 - Possibility that CalTrain right of way would be inadequate and result in some taking of local businesses
 - Noise
 - Height and negative impact of view of Bay
 - Safety-Grade separate every intersection
 - Important to receive community education and input on the design and aesthetics of the system. Anything done in Belmont needs to be very high quality
 - Potential negative impact on the Airline industry

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- Connectivity to Caltrain, Caltrans, Sam Trans, Airport, etc. Where would Belmont residents go to catch the high speed train? Addressing the accessibility, parking, and ease of use of that station is important. Synchronizing with SamTrans routes would be crucial.
- Need for High Speed Rail to have a presence in our community, especially in terms of supporting community events and making direct and indirect contributions to community organizations, support of local public safety, etc.
- That a spirit of future cooperation is instilled in the project management people and the maintenance people after the project is completed. This comment is borne out of years of arrogance exhibited by Cal Trans in our community. There is an impression on the Peninsula that San Francisco receives much greater attention and service. We would like to have direct contact with decision-makers and engineers to ensure Belmont and the neighboring cities are heard in the process and that decisions that impact our community are not made on cost alone. We would be glad to expand upon this in one on one meetings.
- Fire life safety training and potential rescue aspect should something happen and become a confined-space type of rescue.
- Insuring that frequent local service is not sacrificed for the sake of long-haul express runs. Don't let the train become something that only "flies" through Belmont, but can't be conveniently used by the locals to get up and down the Peninsula.
- Provisions for long-term parking (passengers to LA may be gone for days, not hours) that doesn't impact the local parking inventory.
- Any height of the new structure should not obstruct neighborhoods view of the wooded hills. During the design of the current grade separation, the Citizen Task Force, Planning Commission, Council and City Staff met for a year to come up with the current low-profile design. The new High Speed Rail grade separation will have a very big negative impact on our downtown and our businesses along Old County Road if not designed properly. It is very important that Belmont have ongoing input on the new project so it will turn out as nice as the current grade separation. Menlo Park already has City Staff meeting with HSR Staff to have early input on this project.
- It does seem odd that for a project this size that the Cities and the public will only have until March 6th to comment. All Cities need to have a period for review after the preliminary design is done.
- The current empty lot on the northwest corner of Old County Road and Ralston Avenue contain some historically sensitive items from the old "Angelo's Corners" of the 1850's. This corner was going to have an open

plaza to protect them. Any construction on this corner could destroy historic artifacts. If the new project remains at the current elevation when crossing Harbor Blvd and Ralston Ave, this would mean that intersections at Harbor and Ralston at Old County Road and El Camino Real will have to be lowered even more so truck traffic can clean the overhead. If the new project is going to be elevated higher than the current design, then this is not what we want for Belmont. It would separate East and West Belmont more than it is now.

4. These trains are in operation in other countries such as France and Japan. Are you familiar with these trains? Have you had personal experience with this type of service?

Not personally, but others on my staff and in the community have

5. High Speed Rail advocates speak about reducing freeway congestion, reducing airport congestion, reducing energy consumption and reliance on foreign oil as well as a reduction in green house gas emissions as benefits to the project. What is your reaction to this list?

Debatable until gas prices reach \$ 7/gal, which it will eventually

- 6. Do you have any other thoughts or concerns generally about the high speed rail effort especially as it relates to your specific community?
 - People in our community need to know what is happening with this project on an ongoing basis. In that regard:
 - Provide continuous email blasts that I can pass on to key stakeholders
 - Televise meetings on our local cable government channel. We can assist you in doing this
 - Come to our Planning Commission and City Council meetings from time to time and brief our officials on the project. These meetings are televised, so you would be briefing the community at the same time you are briefing officials
 - Call a town hall meeting in Belmont and invite residents to give you feedback on the project
- 7. We want to keep you informed as this project moves forward. How can we best do that?
 - See question # 6 above
 - Yes, we have a group email list of about 300 residents that routinely receive Council agendas, notices, etc. We can add your distribution materials to this group.

- Somehow involve our Public Works Director and Community Development Director in the project planning
- Periodically solicit feedback from our Mayor, City Council and Planning Commission as well as City staff on how the project is going
- Participate in local events such as having information available and a booth at the Belmont Earth Day Event.
- Provide a FAQ sheet with a local emphasis that can be referred to by staff.
- Set up a good website and 800 number for questions and updates.
- Provide a teaching curriculum for the project including explanation of the project engineering for local schools.
- 8. How can we reach out to the group/issue area you represent to get the work out about meetings and project information? Are there mailing lists, email lists, existing meetings, newsletters, we should be aware of? Some people have community a Community Working Group or Policy Working Group. Do you think that is a good idea? Why? Or why not?
 - See Question 7 above
 - Yes, I think community working groups are a good idea.
 - We have quarterly brownbag lunches with the presidents of our neighborhood associations. These lunches might also be opportunities for outreach
 - Elected officials in the County have a monthly dinner and you would be welcome to speak. Every City in the County is represented at these dinners
 - The City Managers in San Mateo County have a meeting monthly for two hours to discuss relevant topics in our county.
 - The various City Department Directors also have monthly meetings with their peers in other cities (Finance, Police, Fire, Public Works, Community Development)
 - Our cable government channel is under utilized. It would be relatively easy to arrange some informational programming time for you.
- 9. Who else should we be reaching out to? How do we contact them?

Various Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, School Superintendents and Principals both public and private, Neighborhood Assns. We can help you reach these groups in Belmont.

- 10. Do you think this is generally something your business/organization would support? Why/why not? What are your concerns? Anything you would like to add that we didn't cover?
 - Yes if you have no negative impact on them
 - I would guess the airline industry will look upon this system as a threat. Your challenge is to find a way to partner with them. Start by reaching out to them. What could HSR do to benefit the airline industry? Joint ticketing perhaps, especially for foreign visitors? Redeye freight hauls? Joint marketing of transportation opportunities in order to grow the ridership base for both?

DRAFT

March 2, 2009

Carrie Pourvahidi, Acting Executive Director California High Speed Rail Authority 925 L Street, Suite 1425 Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: High Speed Rail San Francisco/San Jose HST Project

Dear Ms. Pourvahidi:

San Francisco Bay Area Peninsula residents ushered in a new vision for transportation statewide with the approval of Proposition 1A High Speed Rail Bond (HSR) last November. As Mayors of these cities, it is our duty to raise specific concerns and suggest approaches that will help move us ahead as partners toward a successful HSR design and construction.

In response to your request for input, our individual cities are preparing comments describing specific and localized concerns about the possible impacts of the HSR on our communities. We are also preparing suggestions for mitigations.

During this process, we have discovered that our cities share many similar concerns. The purpose of this joint letter is to share these concerns with you and to express our strong belief that particular care must be taken to integrate the HSR into the living fabric of the Peninsula, where the proposed HSR would pass through a densely-built and urbanized environment that is substantively different from most of the HSR's impact area.

As you know, many of our cities are built along the Caltrain right-of-way. These cities have grown and developed thriving downtowns and increasingly dense residential neighborhoods to be aligned with the SB 375 mandate to create an integrated land use/transportation strategy. We are united in requesting that urban design be as high a priority in the planning of the HSR as engineering considerations.

Other notable concerns that our cities share include:

- protecting the walkable, bikeable nature of our communities
- ensuring that the parts of our cities on opposite sides of the HSR tracks are not disconnected from each other, physically or visually
- · keeping local road crossings open
- maintaining and improving Caltrain's Baby Bullet (express) and local service

Ms. Pourvahidi February 24, 2009 Page 2 of 2

We request that the HSR Authority (HSRA), its design team from HNTB, and Caltrain, work with us collaboratively to develop optimal urban design alternatives that will be included in the scope of the EIR/EIS.

We also request that the EIR/EIS include:

- evaluation of at-grade, above-grade, and below-grade trench and tunnel options
- a number of ways to integrate the HSR and Caltrain services (hybrid option)

We would like the HSRA, Caltrain, and HNTB to substantively engage with our group of cities throughout the scoping period, and particularly before the scoping report is finalized, to ensure that our concerns are understood and the alternatives to be analyzed address these concerns. We look forward to working together as partners for the duration of the process from design to construction.

The HSR will be a legacy project that will last for generations and will help fulfill California's sustainability goals. Let's do it right the first time.

Sincerely,

Peter Drekmeier, Mayor

cc: City Council
James Keene, City Manager
Dominic Spaethling, CAHSRA
Dan Leavitt, CAHSRA